

Lista das aves colligidas pelo Sr. Serpa Pinto, no Ibo, em 1885. Por José Augusto de Sousa. *Tom. cit.* (Separate copies.)]

The former is a list of some of the species (30 in number) collected by Senhors Capello and Ivens, between $11^{\circ} 22'$ and $15^{\circ} 38'$ S. lat., and $23^{\circ} 43'$ and $30^{\circ} 21'$ E. long., during their well-known journey across the "Dark Continent." Most of the species are South-African, but *Amauresthes fringilloides* appears to have been found for the first time to the north of Zanzibar, and *Musophaga rossæ* beyond the limit of the Province of Angola. From the river Coroca two species are added to the list.

The latter paper contains a list of 23 species sent to the Lisbon Museum by the celebrated explorer Senhor Serpa Pinto, and principally collected between about $12^{\circ} 25'$ S. lat., and $40^{\circ} 40'$ E. long. Among the more interesting are *Smithornis capensis* and *Erythrocercus thomsoni*, Shelley.

95. *Taczanowski on the Birds of Ussuria.*

[Liste des Oiseaux reçus récemment du Sud-ouest du Pays Oussourien. Par L. Taczanowski. Bull. Soc. Zool. France, 1885, pp. 464-478.]

This list contains remarks on 171 species obtained for the Warsaw Museum by MM. Jankowski and Kalinowski; the majority from localities between 43° and 46° N. lat., with a few from Vladivostok, among the latter being an example of the Cinereous Vulture (*Vultur monachus*), new to Eastern Siberia. *Buphus coromandus* is recorded for the first time from North China.

L.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

We have received the following letters addressed to the Editors of 'The Ibis':—

SIRS,—In 'The Ibis,' 1884 (p. 42), Mr. Seebohm wrote, "it seems probable that the name of *Bubo maximus* must be erased from the list of Japan birds." I am happy to be

able to avert this erasure, as the Norwich Museum has recently received from Mr. F. Ringer, of Nagasaki, the gift of a typical specimen of *B. maximus* (sive *ignavus*), which was shot on the Goto Islands, a group about 50 miles W.S.W. of Nagasaki, and included in the south-western portion of the Japanese group.

I am &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

Northrepps Hall, Norwich.

June 14, 1886.

SIRS,—At page 367 *supra*, in a report on Dr. Finsch's and my paper on Birds from New Guinea, it was remarked, concerning *Microdynamis parva* of Salvadori, that "the exact locality of the specimen is not stated." I beg leave to remark that in our first paper on Birds from New Guinea (Paradiseidæ), 'Zeitschrift für die gesammte Ornithologie,' 1885, p. 372, it was stated, in a note, that all birds mentioned by us without locality are from the Horseshoe Mountains (see map, *supra*, p. 238). This note has not been reproduced in the translation of our paper (*supra*, p. 240).

Yours &c.,

Dresden Zoological Museum,

July 13th, 1886.

A. B. MEYER.

[This is, no doubt, the case. But in our eyes "locality" is of such importance that it is advisable to state it distinctly, and not to leave it to be found out by reference to a footnote in a former paper, which may be easily overlooked.—EDD.]

SIRS,—I do not think that *Ptilopus melanocephalus* has yet been recorded from Borneo or its adjacent islands. I was ashore for a couple of hours on the island of Bangeuy at the end of last month, when one of my servants shot a male in full plumage. I am unable to say whether this bird is permanently located in Bangeuy, or whether the one

shot was a straggler from Falassan, from which island I think it has been recorded. A day or two previously I obtained a specimen of *Orthorhamphus magnirostris* out of a flock of five at Cape Scinpangmengaio. This species is marked with a query in Salvadori's work. I compared the specimen with Gould's description.

Yours faithfully,

A. EVERETT.

Labuan, Borneo.

July 15, 1886.

P.S.—It is said by natives that Parrots, similar to those found in the Philippines (*Tanygnathus* or *Prioniturus*?), occur on the Mantanani Islands, a group of coral islets about 18 miles off the N.W. coast of Borneo.

SIRS,—There is so much with which I am disposed to agree in my friend Mr. Seebohm's speculations on the genesis and distribution of species of birds, that although I have for some time felt doubtful whether his views as to the effects of the Glacial epoch are warranted by known palæontological data, I have not hitherto attempted to criticise his conclusions. In previous papers, for instance in those on *Cursorius* and *Scolopax* (*antea*, pp. 121, 141), and also, if my memory is correct, in some earlier writings, the view advocated by Mr. Seebohm has been that the differentiation of the species belonging to a genus, or to a section of a genus, dates from some part of the Glacial epoch. In his last paper on *Himantopus*, however, a very much greater change within the same limited geological time is advocated, and a conclusion is adopted which appears to me very startling and, as I think I shall show, quite untenable. This conclusion (p. 226) is, that "the couple of hundred species and subspecies of birds which compose the family Charadriidæ" are "the variously modified descendants of a species of wader which lived on the shores of the north polar basin some time before the close of the Glacial epoch."

It is manifest from the context, coupled with the remarks on the family Charadriidæ at p. 122, that the author of the

passage advocates the view that genera so diverse as *Charadrius*, *Tringa*, *Scolopax*, *Totanus*, *Himantopus*, and *Numenius* (and, I suppose, *Cursorius* and *Glareola*) have all originated from one ancestral type since the middle of the Pleistocene period. Mr. Seebohm has evidently overlooked the palæontological evidence that exists, and a brief notice of this may be of interest to readers of 'The Ibis.'

It is true that our knowledge of fossil birds is very limited ; but still something has been ascertained, and an exhaustive account of the information obtained up to 1871 is given by our eminent foreign member M. Alphonse Milne-Edwards in his 'Recherches Anatomiques et Paléontologiques pour servir à l'histoire des Oiseaux Fossiles de la France.' In this work (see 'The Ibis,' 1869, p. 219) species of *Numenius*, *Tringa*, and *Totanus*, besides a form called *Elorius*, and, above all, a true *Himantopus*, are described from Miocene beds. A bird, referred with doubt to *Numenius* (*N. gypsorum?*), is described from the Eocene ; but this, although undoubtedly Charadrian, was a somewhat generalized form intermediate between Curlews and Godwits. In America a genus named *Paleotringa*, probably Charadrian, but of which the affinities are doubtful, has been found in Cretaceous beds. Neglecting the older types, it is manifest that, so far from all the genera of Charadriidæ having originated towards the end of the Glacial epoch, several of the best marked existed in the far more ancient Miocene period.

In case some ornithologists should not be familiar with the relative importance of the geological terms used, I may perhaps be allowed to show how very great the difference is. Omitting all disputed terms, four principal divisions of geological time are usually recognized subsequent to the commencement of the Tertiary era ; these are, commencing from the earliest :—Eocene, Miocene, Pliocene, and Pleistocene. But these divisions, judging by the changes that took place in the fauna within the limits of each—by far the best test—were by no means of equal duration. Eocene must have been nearly equal to the Miocene and Pliocene together, whilst each of the latter greatly exceeded the Pleistocene.

The Glacial epoch was comprised in the Pleistocene, with which it may be regarded as practically equivalent.

Most of the birds' bones which have been found in cave-breccias and other Pleistocene deposits appear to have been those of species that are still living at the present day ; and there is no reason to believe that changes in birds have taken place more rapidly than in Mammalia, the fossil remains of which are far more abundant. Indeed the evidence points rather the other way. Now the majority of the Pleistocene Mammalia are living species and, so far as it is practicable to judge, nearly all—perhaps all truly generic forms, such as are adopted amongst birds by Mr. Seebohm—date from the Pliocene at least, whilst many are older.

In cases such as those of *Scolopax* and *Cursorius*, where the differentiation suggested only extends to a few allied species, there is a greater possibility that Mr. Seebohm may be correct. Indeed some years ago I suggested a similar origin—the intervention of an ice-covered continent in the Glacial epoch—to account for the separation of certain allied species of migratory birds in Eastern and Western Asia ; but the hypothesis should be used with caution. I doubt whether, in any case, all the species of any considerable genus have been differentiated since the commencement of the Pleistocene.

Mr. Seebohm's geological views are also, I think, in several respects open to exception. It is possible that there may have been half a dozen alternations of glacial and interglacial phases in the Pleistocene epoch (p. 226), but it is at least equally probable there were none ; and certainly the evidence existing for more than one interglacial phase is quite insufficient to justify the founding of arguments upon it. Then what reason is there for supposing that at one portion of the Glacial epoch a glacier (ice-sheet?) stretched "from the North Pole down the mountains of Greenland" (p. 226), and that in a subsequent phase of that epoch a different glacier extended "across the North Pole from the Rocky Mountains either to Novaya Zemlya or to the mountains of Eastern Siberia" ? (p. 227). Unless a change in the distribution of

land and water took place in the interim, the ice of one cold cycle would probably occupy the same area as did that of the preceding cycle. Without some evidence of the area occupied by ice-sheets at different times, it is scarcely scientific to suggest hypothetical glaciers in order to account for hypothetical specific differentiations. Moreover the area of the ice-sheets in North America and Western Europe is fairly well ascertained, and does not, so far as I can see, support Mr. Seebohm's hypothesis. Certainly he is mistaken in the inference he draws at p. 228, where he says, "The shores of the Pacific are so much more mountainous than those of the Atlantic, that the ice of the Glacial periods must have extended much further south on the former than it did on the shore of the Atlantic." In the Eastern hemisphere the statement that the Pacific coast is much more mountainous than the Atlantic is open to question, whilst in America it has been ascertained that despite the mountains in the neighbourhood of the Pacific the ice did not extend so far south along that shore as it did on the Atlantic. This necessarily follows from the arrangement of the isothermal lines, which show the west coast of each continent to be the warmer, and which must have shown similar differences in the ice-age, as they are due to the earth's rotation.

These are, however, matters of minor importance. Upon the main question, I think that Mr. Seebohm over-estimates the effects of the Glacial epoch, and that the origin of existing genera and, to a great extent, of existing species of birds is of higher antiquity. On the other hand, I heartily agree with Mr. Seebohm in believing that the laws of geographical distribution are not the same for the whole animal kingdom; and in confirmation of his argument on this head I may mention that, as I pointed out two years ago, in an address to the Geological Section of the British Association, there are some important differences between land Mollusca and Vertebrata in this respect. I believe, too, that the distribution of Plants differs materially from that of Vertebrate animals.

W. T. BLANFORD.

September 15, 1886.

Report on the British Museum for 1885.—The Parliamentary Report of the British Museum for 1885 contains the following passages on ornithological subjects :—

“The ‘Hume’ Collection of birds of the British Asian Empire consists of 63,000 bird-skins, 18,500 eggs, and 500 nests, besides 371 skins of Mammalia.

“This collection has been presented by Allan O. Hume, Esq., C.B., and is, without comparison, the most extensive, complete, and important that has ever been formed of the birds of the Indian region. The aim of the donor was to obtain specimens from, and to acquire a perfect knowledge of, the avifauna of every part of British Asia. For this purpose he organized a system under which numerous local observers and collectors worked for and with him. He fitted out expeditions, with a staff of collectors and taxidermists, into Scinde, Coorg, Manipur, the Malayan Peninsula, Tenasserim, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; he also acquired, either by purchase or presentation, collections formed by other well-known Indian ornithologists, as the Mandelli collection from Sikim and Tiber, Brook’s North-western and Central Indian birds, Adams’s Lambhur birds, Bingham’s collections from Delhi and Tenasserim, and Scully’s collection from Turkestan.

“The value of this collection, therefore, should not be measured merely by the number of specimens which it contains, but by the judgment which determined their selection, the history attached to many of them, and the completeness of the several series. Assuming that the collection contains 2000 species, each would be represented on an average by about 30 specimens, and that number is, in the majority of cases, necessary to illustrate the geographical distribution or variation of the species according to age, season, or locality.

“A series of 5331 specimens of American birds, presented by F. D. Godman, Esq., F.R.S., and O. Salvin, Esq., F.R.S.—This is the first instalment of a donation which, when completed, will, with regard to its scientific value, be perhaps not surpassed even by the donation reported above. The

donors have been engaged in the formation of a collection of the birds of Tropical America for many years, and are at present describing its contents in their magnificent work entitled 'Biologia Centrali-Americana.' In order to render their collection, as soon as possible, available for general study, and more especially for the purpose of the 'Catalogue of Birds,' which the Trustees are publishing at present, they have offered to transfer to the British Museum such parts as have been completed in their work. All the specimens are in the most perfect condition and accurately labelled, so that their incorporation into the general collection entails no more work than the mechanical labour of placing them in the cabinets.

"Besides the 'Hume' collection with 82,000 skins, nests, and eggs, and besides 5331 specimens from the 'Salvin and Godman' collection, and 2281 from the 'Selater' collection, the additions amount to 2149, of which the most important are the following :—

"Pairs of the parent birds of the Ring-Ouzel, Shoveller, Teal, Pochard, and Tufted Duck, with their nests and eggs, from Norfolk ; presented by Lord Walsingham.

"Pairs of the parent birds of the Common Gull, Herring-Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Arctic Tern (five pairs), and Richardson's Skua (two pairs, with their nests and eggs, or young, from the Island of Moussa, Shetland) ; presented by Lieut. G. H. Bruce, R.N., and E. M. Nelson, Esq.

"Nest and young, with parent bird of the Common Wren ; presented by Colonel Irby.

"A pair of Teal, with nest and young, from Tring ; presented by the Hon. Walter Rothschild.

"Nine hundred and thirty-six specimens from various localities ; presented by R. Bowdler Sharpe, Esq.

"Thirty Finches from Northern France and the Vosges Mountains ; presented by E. Hargitt, Esq.

"Twenty specimens of Finches and Starlings from Norway ; presented by the Christiania Museum.

"Twelve specimens of rare Buntings from Siberia and Japan ; presented by Henry Seebohm, Esq.

“Three specimens of Steller’s Sea-eagle (*Haliaetus pelagicus*), from Kamtchatka; presented by Henry Seebohm, Esq.

“A collection of 198 specimens from Fao, in the Persian Gulf; presented by W. D. Cumming, Esq.

“Twenty-four specimens from the Island of Palawan, collected by W. E. Lempriere, containing 13 species new to the collection, with three new species; purchased.

“Two specimens of *Falco babylonicus* and one of *F. peregrinus* from Rajputana; presented by Scrope Doig, Esq.

“Sixty-six skins from Muscat, including the types of *Merops muscatensis* and *Bubo milesi*; presented by Colonel Miles.

“Twenty-two birds from Aden; presented by Major Yerbury, R.A.

“Eight hundred and fifty-three specimens from Buenos Ayres and Patagonia, collected by the late Mr. Henry Durnford, containing the types of *Cyclorhis altirostris* and *Porzana spiloptera*; purchased.

‘A specimen of the rare Swainson’s Warbler (*Helonæa swainsoni*) from Charleston; presented by Dr. Elliott Coues.

“An example of the rare Pygmy Owl (*Micrathene whitneyi*) from Arizona; presented by H. K. Coale, Esq.

“Two specimens of the Tooth-billed Bower-bird (*Scenopeus dentirostris*), and a pair of *Cracticus rufescens* from Queensland; presented by T. H. B. Bowyer, Esq.”

Sale of the Jardine Ornithological Collection.—The dispersal, on the 17th of June last, of this historical collection by Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, the well-known auctioneers of literary property, is an event which can hardly be passed without notice. It is true that nearly twelve years have been allowed to elapse since the death of Sir William Jardine, in 1874, and the intimate knowledge of the treasures contained in his collection was confined to an annually narrowing circle; but ornithologists were not wanting who remembered the numerous species described by him from time to time,

and who knew full well that no such opportunity had hitherto presented itself for the acquisition of the actual types or of typical specimens. It had been hoped that this entire collection, consisting of upwards of 8000 specimens (the British portion having gone to Edinburgh), would have been acquired by the British Museum of Natural History; but we believe that a very reasonable offer was refused, and one which eventually proved to be in excess of the total obtained at the sale. Either the catalogues were sparingly circulated or else they were sent to the wrong people: the result was a poor attendance and, as a rule, ridiculously low prices. If, in addition to the sale catalogue, the printed copies which the auctioneers held of Sir William's *detailed* catalogue, consisting of 208 pages, had been circulated or even sold for a small sum, there can be little doubt that the amount realized would have been far greater. We were glad to see that both the Cambridge University and the British Museum secured some valuable lots; and the buyer for the latter obtained, in a lot of unspecified mounted birds, nothing less than the type of Bulwer's Petrel, for a few shillings. If this specimen had been catalogued, or if its existence had been known, it would probably have fetched many pounds. A sadder sight than the throwing away of this fine collection among dealers and plumassiers has seldom been witnessed: but through no fault of the auctioneers, who did their best with this, to them, novel description of property.

New Work by Professor R. Ridgway.—We are glad to hear that Messrs. J. B. Lippincott & Co. have in the press a 'Manual of North-American Birds' by our valued Foreign Member Prof. Ridgway, of Washington. The work is to contain 425 illustrations, suitably executed, and, as regards geographical limits, classification, and nomenclature, it will be in conformity with the Code of the American Ornithologists' Union.